

Bioblurb

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Abstract: The Italian humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini wrote abundantly about Europe and is often viewed as a pioneer of European thought. Works previous to the treatise *De Europa* leave no doubt that the author pondered the subject long since. The treatise *De Europa*, however, has the advantage of dealing with Europe from multiple dimensions. Though the work can provide matter to make the case for an identity of Europe, Piccolomini portrays a block full of tensions and conflicts, where national languages and national identities begin to emerge. It is the historical circumstance of a Turkish threat to Europe that makes the appeal to a European identity more compelling. Still the case for European identity in Piccolomini is hardly more than an emotional response to the historical moment.

A recent reader on European identity includes excerpts from a letter of Piccolomini to Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, as well as from the anti-Turkish speeches, delivered at the diet of Frankfurt, in 1454. One of the sources used by the editor was an anthology of Piccolomini edited by the Swiss historian Berthe Widmer that published the letter to Cusa under the title “Defense of the West.” It seems, therefore that, despite changes in geopolitic contexts since the time of the Swiss historian (i.e. since the 1950s), Piccolomini is still viewed as a pro-European author *par excellence*.

Since the 1930s the theme of ‘Europe’ prompted innumerable studies from different points of view (historical, philological, philosophical). The bulk of literature could be divided along two lines of inquiry: one that attempts to periodize the meaning of Europe and simultaneously to establish the

moment when an awareness of Europe as being something more than a geographical area appears; and another that attempts to define an European identity and its foundations as Denis de Rougemont did in his innumerable essays.

Regardless of the approach, however, reference to the work of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini became de rigueur, mainly on account of his treatise on Europe. The German scholar Werner Fritzsche was the first to put Piccolomini in the pantheon of the theorists of Europe. Fritzsche portrayed the work of the humanist as a coming of age of the European self, namely, the passage from Christianity to Europe, marking the moment when Western Christian community became secular.

Denys Hay signals the 14th and 15th centuries as the period in which “the use and the emotional content” of the word Europe increased.¹ And, again, Piccolomini is the key author who introduces a novelty: the frequent use of the adjective *Europaeus*.² At the same time, Piccolomini, and the humanists with him, favoured the term Europe over *Christianitas*³, not because they abhorred Christianity, but rather because they were looking at Europe as a cultural and geographical block defined by its opposition to the Turkish world.

A different approach was taken by Denis de Rougemont or Federico Chabod, for example. The last author delivered a lecture on history of Europe in the troubled post-war time. The fact that he was a historian didn't refrain him from taking a political and philosophical stance. Indeed he connects his work of historian with a deep belief “in some supreme values, both moral and spiritual, which create our European civilization.”⁴ To Chabod the Italian humanist is a forerunner of the Voltairean idea of a *république des lettres*, inasmuch as he grounds his idea of Europe on cultural affinities.⁵

Thus the prevailing sentiment was that the Italian humanist brought the concept of Europe to

¹ Hay 1966: 73, see the whole chapter “The emergence of Europe.”

² Hay 1966: 86 f.

³ So Hay 1966, and more clearly id. 1957: 51.

⁴ Words from Chabod himself in the opening lecture as recorded by Ernesto Sestan in the preface to Chabod 2010: 5.

⁵ Ibid.: 44 f.

expression, and some would go as far as to credit him with the role of a pioneer of modern ideals that led to the European Union.

In this paper I shall argue that Europe was a constant theme in the work of Piccolomini, that ‘his Europe’ is traversed by many contradictions and, ultimately, reflects none other than the critical circumstances of his time. First I shall present texts prior to the treatise on Europe which bear relation to the theme; afterwards, I will put forward an analysis of the treatise *De Europa* itself.

European identity, or rather the reconnaissance of Europe, became a concern to Piccolomini since his earliest writings, as his description of Basel in a letter from 1438 shows. The purpose of the letter was to magnify the city in order to present it as the most appropriate place for an event, namely a General Council, involving the whole Europe:⁶

“Basel, so it seems to me, if it isn’t in the centre of Christianity it is very close to it. Indeed it has the furthest Eastern Christians, namely, the Hungarians; the furthest Southern Christians, the Sicilians (I leave aside the Cypriots who obey to the Greek Church rather than to the Roman Church); the Spaniards, close to Gades, inhabit the extreme West; Dacians and Getae are farther North. Beyond these peoples there is no right worship of Christ.”⁷

Such a view of Europe is structured by the quest of a centre. Piccolomini goes on confirming the centrality of Basel: it is in the middle of Germany which, in turn, amounts to half of Christianity for it has as much population as Italy, France and Spain together. Following this geographical outline, Piccolomini reinforces the case for the centrality of Germany in Europe with a language map. Again, from this particular angle, the key-position in Europe falls to Germany, considering the

⁶ There is a significance of the Basel Council for Europe that may be examined under two dimensions: as the first meeting of European diplomats; as a disseminating point of ideas which eventually were developed by parliamentarians. On this subject see Meuthen 1985: passim, and Helmrath 1987: 175 ff.

⁷ *Basilea, sicut michi videtur, aut Christianitatis centrum aut ei proxima est. Extremos namque Christianorum, Pannonios ad orientem habet, ad meridiem Siculos (taceo Ciprios magis Graece quam Romane sapientes); occidentem partem vicini Gadibus Hispani colunt, septentriones Daces et Gethe. Nec ultra hos populos recte colitur Christus, veraque his finibus clauditur religio.* (Piccolomini, Letter to Philippe of Coetquis, Basel, 1438; text as edited by Hartmann 1936: 194 f)

variety of languages spoken in the area of the Holy Roman Empire which runs from the Serbo-Croatian to Hungarian (besides German). At the same time and, to a certain extent, in a paradoxical way, Piccolomini reduces the variety of languages in the centre of Europe, as he states that Austria's language is German; as it is Germany's language, though the variety of German of Cologne isn't much remote from Flemish or from the language spoken in the Duchy of Brabant; and Flemish, in turn, does not differ from English; at last, Scottish is as much different from English, as Austrian is from the Bavarian (sc. German) language, therefore German with its cognates is the most widespread language of Europe.⁸

Piccolomini's demonstrandum is clear: either from a linguistic view or from a geographical view the city of Basel is part of Germany which is in turn the major part of Christianity and its centre. This concentric outline, on one hand, imitates the presentation of Florence by Leonardo Bruni, on the other hand, it is paralleled by many texts of the 14th and 15th century which discuss, in the context of the Great Schism, the most fitted place to serve as the core centre of Christianity. But more than that, it grounds Europe's identity on Christian faith.

Such a penchant to look at Europe as a whole is undeniably a constant in Piccolomini's work and one of its peculiarities — and I mean it was so much before he wrote his treatise on Europe. Actually the European horizon is recognizable in a series of biographies of illustrious men and women written around 1444: *De viris illustribus*. The assortment of portrayed personalities is quite disparate, as it includes ecclesiastics, monarchs, *condottieri* and scholars. Nevertheless, an underlying purpose of embracing the whole of Europe is clearly perceptible. Indeed, we find there

⁸ *Continet enim [Germania] latissimas terras et [...] tribus omnino diversis utitur lingwis: Dalmatica, Pannonica et Theutonica [...], tantumque a se distant, ut non melius alterutrum se intelligant quam Gallici atque Italici. Et, si recte inspicias, licet Britano quintam se esse velint nescio quam nacionem, aut Theutonicum sermonem aut Theutonico similem habent. Nec tamen Britanus Australem intelligit; et esse lingwam eandem michi manifestissima ratione deduco. Austriam michi omnes Theutonicam esse concedunt. [...] Ceterum si Flandrensem tecum in Angliam duxeris aliquem, non inepte ipso uteris interprete; adeo namque vicinis inter se verbis utuntur, ut sine ullo negotio in alterius lingwam alter concedat. Scotus vero, [...] non plus ab Anglico quam Australis a Bавero distat, ut hanc Teutonicam lingwam nexu et concatenacione quadam ab Austria usque in Scociam facile productam videas. (apud Hartmann 1936, 194 f)*

Charles VII from France, Henry V from England; the doge of Venice, Francesco Foscari; the ruler of Florence, Cosimo Medici; Eric of Pomerania, king of the Kalmar Union (Denmark, Norway and Sweden); Wladislaw II, king of Poland and D. Duarte, king of Portugal. Truly, the character, the fortunes, the boldness of each personality are the focus, but the work may certainly be read as an attempt of identification of contemporary Europe.

The author's concern for Europe, however, will become paramount in the works written during the 1450s, namely, the *History of Austria*, the *History of Bohemia*, the booklet *On Germany* (*De Germania*), and finally and above all, the treatise *De Europa*. Although the first three works have in common the feature of being national histories, all together they are a piecemeal portrait of Europe. As a matter of fact, they don't confine themselves to the national sphere. A good deal of the *History of Austria* is a portrait of Italy with descriptions of the main cities of the North, and, in all these works, there are pressing issues of European politics (in the case of the *History of Bohemia*, the Hussite heresy is figured as a threat to all Europe).

It was, nevertheless, the treatise *De Europa* that brought about the aura of founding father of the European studies for Piccolomini. According to the address to Cardinal Antonio Cerdà, the work has its origin in the editorial vision of a bookseller who offered Piccolomini the *Liber Augustalis* of Benvenuto da Imola. The bookseller asked the Italian scholar for a continuation with the four emperors who were not included in the original work. Piccolomini wrote the continuation,⁹ but the task evoked on him the idea of a more ambitious work, as consideration of the events placed under the reign of Frederick III provided matter for a short history.¹⁰

This presentation of the work according to a methodological principle is an oversimplification for,

⁹ The continuation, which contains the lives of Rupert, Sigmund, Albert II e Frederick III, was written and was published by Künzle 1958.

¹⁰ *Ac tum subiret mentem multa et magna inter christianos gesta esse ab eo tempore, quo Fridericus imperium accepit, usque in hanc diem, opusculum seorsum edere statui, in quo singularia quedam eius temporis sub compendio ad posteritatis memoriam transmitterem digna memoratu. edidi igitur breuem historiam.* (Piccolomini, Letter to Antonio Cerdà, 26th February 1458, in *De Europa*: 25)

as we shall see, its architecture is much more complex.

Let us take the opening sentence of the book which gives us some clues to understand European identity or, at least, what is understood as Europe:

As briefly as I can, I wish to record for posterity what, to my knowledge, were the most memorable deeds accomplished among the Europeans and the islanders who are counted as Christian during the reign of Emperor Frederick III. I will also include earlier material from time to time, when the explanation of places and events seems to demand it.¹¹

This short preamble poses three assumptions of the treatise: first, it takes for granted that the emperor and the empire are the reference framework of European politics; second, it asserts the work is historiographic since its subject is *gesta*; third, it states that, in this *gesta*, the actors are the “Europeans.” This calls for some clarification. The first assumption is not to be heeded, since the reign of Emperor Frederick serves no more than as a time-frame. About the second assumption we must bear in mind that, although conceived as historiographic work predominantly, the overriding feature is the appeal to the author’s own geographical culture: indeed, it is not only events that the author considers, but also, to a no lesser extent the *regiones*, the *provinciae* and the peoples (*genus*, *gens*).

A more decisive novelty lies in the third assumption, concerning the actors of this Europe. In fact, either historical figures such as John Hunyad, the Infante Pedro, Joan of Arc, Frederick III, Alfonso VI, Francesco Sforza, or collective entities such as Bavarians, English, Hungarians, Florentines, are all leveled down to their least common denominator, i.e., the fact they are “Europeans.” Yet this ‘Europeanness’, follows, first, from a spatial, geographical data. The spatial data, in turn, is the bonding element of a work that features diverse styles. Actually, along events or figures magnified

¹¹ *Que sub Friderico, tertio eius nominis imperatore, apud Europeos et, qui nomine christiano censentur, insulares homines gesta feruntur memoratu digna mihi que cognita, tradere posteris quam breuissime libet. (De Europa, 27; translation by R. Brown in Piccolomini 2013: 51). Baldi 2003: 620, n. 5 maintains the traditional reading apud Europeos et, qui nomine Cristiano censentur, “visto il costante riferimento della storiografia”. Van Heck on his edition, doesn’t mention the reading, though, as it is plain from the letter to Cerdà, such identification between christiani and europeis is in perfect harmony with Piccolomini’s thought.*

by the narrative skill of Piccolomini (e.g. the battle of Varna, the incest of Count D'Armagnac, the murder of Battista Canettoli in Bologna), one finds descriptions of all sorts (peoples, cities, customs...). Although such variety is subordinated to the spatial arrangement, it would be a superficial reading to reduce the work to a hasty picture of Europe intermingled with entertaining pieces of narrative.

Contrary to this superficial reading, it is possible, in my view, to make an in-depth reading that gives us back the 15th century Europe in its very political and cultural configuration.

De Europa starts with Hungary and the reason is obvious, despite the justification set out by the author (sc. that Hungary was close to Austria, which was Frederick's homeland): in fact, it is the most threatened region in face of the Turkish advance. Accordingly, Piccolomini inserts a chapter summarizing the various conflicts of Hungarians and Turks: the defeat of Varna; the fall of Constantinople and the victory of Belgrade. This presentation of the eastern limit of Europe stands for an assertion of European identity defined by its opposition and vulnerability to an potential attack or even annihilation by the Turkish power. We shall return to this point for it is a *tenet* of Piccolomini's geopolitics.

After Hungary, the author turns south, to the Greek peninsula and islands; he carries on to the Balkans (Bosnia, Ilyricum, Albania); then he goes across Austria, Moravia and Silesia; he heads for the North-Eastern border of Europe (Poland, Lithuania, Ruthenia, Livonia, Prussia); he continues through Saxonia, Denmark, Norway and Sweden; he returns to the middle of Europe with the description of Bohemia and he finally jumps to Frisia, Holland and Hesse.

It follows then a confusing presentation of Germany, then France, the British Islands and the Iberian Peninsula. The closing position is given to Italy and again the option for this arrangement has a clear purpose, namely, to underline the importance of the papacy to the articulation of Europe as a whole.

As noted above, the description of contemporary Italy was already sketched in his History of Austria, but by the time he wrote the treatise on Europe, there was another humanist who had undertaken the same task, Biondo Flavio in his *Italy Illustrated*. The country profile as traced by Piccolomini differs substantially from that of Biondo. It suffices to say, on this matter, that Piccolomini is more interested in contemporary events rather than to go through the history of cities or to provide a whole picture of a city.¹²

The description of Italy begins with Genoa — an option which, again, is dictated by issues of European politics, in this case, the attack by France viewed by Piccolomini as a potential threat to the whole Italy — but the cities that stand out along the description of Italy in the *De Europa* are Florence, Siena and Rome. Florence is singled out on account of its literary riches, whereas Siena, more fully developed because it was Piccolomini's birthplace, is characterized by continuous intestine conflicts.

However, the main part of Italy, for Piccolomini, however, is Rome and this is presented through the two last great pontificates: Eugenius IV and Nicholas V. In the times in which he was a fervent supporter of the Council of Basel, Piccolomini had been a fierce adversary of Eugenius IV. Nevertheless, the portrait of Eugenius IV underlines his personal virtues, and more than that, it does mention his greatest political achievement: the union between Eastern and Western churches.¹³

On the contrary, portrait of Nicholas, who was Piccolomini's friend since the times they had both attended the Council of Basel, is more copious and focus his role in the promotion of humanities:

He ordered books to be tracked down throughout Greece and brought to him, and he saw to it that they were rendered in Latin, offering large rewards to their translator. His favorite translators were George of Trebizond, Lorenzo Valla, Pier Candido Decembrio, and Gregorio of Castello, together with the Greek Demetrius. Their prose so marvelously beguiled the ears of the pope that they never failed to obtain from him whatever they

¹² On the similarity of Biondo's *Italia Illustrata* with Piccolomini's *Europe*, considering the relation that they both establish between actions, characters, peoples and territory, see Vivanti: 1985. Regarding differences, however, the best case illustrating them is Venice: Biondo epitomizes its history (*Italia Illustrata*: 144-165), whereas Piccolomini chooses to concentrate on the portrait of Francesco Foscari and his fortunes (*De Europa*, 50, 191).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 58, 233. The union is more clearly praised in 54, 205.

requested. He keenly desired the poetry of Homer to be made into a Latin epic poem, and a great many tried to oblige him, but only one man succeeded in meeting his exact standards. This was Orazio Romano [...]. Niccolò Perotti [...]. Giovanni Tortelli of Arezzo, with his skillfully written book *On Orthography*, Alberti of Florence, with his excellent volumes *On Architecture*, and other authors almost beyond count earned the favor of this pope with their new compositions. For Nicholas so keenly stimulated and fostered gifted writers that it would be hard to find an age in which the study of humanities, eloquence, and all the other noble arts flourished more than in his own.¹⁴

Based on what Piccolomini says about Nicholas V's role in promoting Greek studies in the West, one could conjecture how the rapprochement between Western Latin and Eastern Greek, unsuccessfully pursued from the political and ecclesiastic standpoint, was, to a certain extent, made possible from a cultural standpoint, if we think of the transfer of *humanitas* and *litterae* from East to West — save to say that this was rather a one-way stream.

But this overview of Rome as centre of humanistic culture is one of the guiding threads of the treatise, and simultaneously, a component of the Europeanness we are looking for.

In fact, it is possible to envisage the humanistic culture as a cultural movement that runs across all Europe and thus accounts for its identity. A read-through of the treatise comes across many figures admired or praised by Piccolomini on the grounds of their humanistic culture: the Duke of Gloucester, Adam of Molins both from England; Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki, from Poland;¹⁵ Pietro Paolo Vergerio¹⁶ from Histria; Dionys Sech¹⁷ from Hungary. This dissemination of humanism seems to concur to the above mentioned idea of Federico Chabod, i.e., that Piccolomini is precursor of a *République des Lettres*.

¹⁴ *Libros ex tota Graecia perquisitos ad se iussit afferri et in latinam conuerti linguam curauit magna premia translatoribus prebens. acceptissimi ei fuerunt in transferendis operibus Georgius Trapezuntius, Laurentius Valla, Petrus Candidus Decembere et Gregorius Castellanus itemque Demetrius natione Grecus, qui soluta oratione utentes, cum pontificis aures mirifice oblectarent, nihil ex eo, quod peterent, non abstulerunt. In Homeri uero poemate, quod heroico carmine latinum fieri magnopere cupiebat, cum plurimi morem ei gerere conarentur, unus tantum inuentum est, qui acri eius iudicio satisfaceret, Oratius Romanus [...]. Nicolaus quoque Perottus Polybio et Grecis commode atque ornate ad nos traducto, Ioannes Tortellius Aretinus libro De Orthographia peritissime conscripto, Albertus Florentinus conditis De Architectura egregii uoluminibus alique pene innumerabiles noua cudentes opera eius pontificis gratiam meruere. Adeo enim ingenia excitauit fouitque Nicolaus, ut uix eum inueniri possit, in quo magis humanitatis et eloquentie ceterarumque bonarum artium studia quam suo floruerint.* (ibid., 58, 235; translation by R. Brown in Piccolomini 2013: 264 f).

¹⁵ *Sbigneus huic urbi [sc. Cracouia] praeest, episcopus litterarum doctrina et morum suauitate insignis.* (ibid., 25, 86).

¹⁶ Celebrated in ibid., 2, 15, as *grecis ac latinis litteris apprime instructus*.

¹⁷ Cf. ibid., 2, 15.

We should not, however, beguile ourselves. To begin with, this humanist culture under papal patronage contrasts (even if the author does not realize it) with Florentine culture which Piccolomini praises for its coalescence with politics as exemplified by several chancellors of the Arno city: Coluccio, Marsupini, Bruni, Poggio. Moreover, if such culture could account for any Europeanness it would not be without a paradox: humanism, as practiced and appreciated by Piccolomini, precludes vernacular culture.¹⁸ If Bruni in his *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulo Histrum* deems worthy of discussion the value of the three Florentine vernacular poets, Piccolomini fails to mention them altogether.¹⁹

This outlook of learned Europe of mid-fifteenth century contravenes somehow the copious linguistic indications sprinkled along the text which draw a ‘linguistic atlas’ of Europe more accurate than the one that can be read in the prologue to the second description of Basel above mentioned.

First among the languages of Europe, the German stretches from Friburg, to the south,²⁰ to Prussia, to the north.²¹ Nonetheless, in the middle of the Holy Roman Empire there are bilingual areas: Silesia, where German and Polish coexist;²² Moravia, where both Czech and German are spoken.²³ Next to the German area there is the Slavic one: it comprehends Carniola²⁴ and a great deal of Eastern Europe, despite the fact that Piccolomini mixes several different languages under the expression *sermo sclauonicus*.²⁵

¹⁸ In fact, contrary to Biondo, who bestows the highest praise on Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch when describing Florence in his *Italy Illuminated*, Piccolomini does mention none of the three *corone florentine* in the *De Europa*.

¹⁹ On this very subject see in these proceedings.

²⁰ Cf. *De Europa*, 42, 149.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19, 98.

²² *Ibid.*, 24, 85.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19, 98.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 19, 63.

²⁵ *Sermo gentis sclauonicus est; latissima est enim hec lingua et in uarias diuisa sectas. Ex Sclauis enim alii romanam ecclesiam sequuntur ut Dalmatae, Croatini, Carni et Poloni; alii Graecorum sequuntur errores ut Bulgari, Rutheni et multi ex Lituaniis; alii proprias hereses inuenere ut Bohemi, Morauii et Bosnenses, quorum magna pars Manicheorum imitatur insaniam; alii gentili adhuc cecitate tententur, quemadmodum multi ex Lituaniis idola colentes. (ibid., 26, 90). There are other areas where ethnic lines cross language lines as is the case of Valaquia: Valachi genus italicum sunt, quemadmodum paulo post referemus; paucos tamen apud Transiluanos inuenias uiros*

Across this twofold linguistic landscape some isolated languages seem like islands in the middle of the European family: the Albanian, a language different from any other from Europe, unknown both to Greeks and Ilyrians;²⁶ Danish, a “language unintelligible to Germans;”²⁷ to these could be added, at last, Roumanian which is a *sermo romanus* “although for the most part so changed that it is hardly intelligible to an Italian.”²⁸ In sum, from a linguistic standpoint, the mark of Europe is fragmentation.

The fragmentation of Europe, already visible from a linguistic standpoint, is compounded if we add religious data. One has to acknowledge that the treatise tries to make the case for the equation of Europe with Christendom, nevertheless it does so at the expense of the denial of a religious variety within Europe, which, for sure, Piccolomini is reluctant to admit. Despite such reluctance, and following some hints left by Piccolomini, it is possible to reconstruct a religious map of Europe that points to fragmentation.

In fact, he makes us know the existence of Manicheans in Bosnia and goes along to describe their customs and beliefs with some detail.²⁹ Besides Manicheans, there are still pagans in Europe as it transpires from the stories heard by the author from a camaldolese monk, who had been missionary in Lituania. The monk in his contact with local population, encountered an animist religions, which venerated natural beings such as serpents, fire or sun. Jews would be altogether swept away from Piccolomini’s European map, were it not the passing-by reference made to a ban by Ludwig of

exercitatos hungarice lingue nescios (ibid., 2, 14); and also Histria: Histri hodie sclai sunt, quamuis maritime urbes italico sermone utuntur, utriusque lingue peritiam habentes (ibid., 18, 62).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15, 57.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 33, 116.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, 16. The only reference to Italian which, like French or the languages from British Isles and Iberian Peninsula, lacks a proper place in the work.

²⁹ *In hac regione quamplurimum heretici possunt, quos uocant Manicheos, pessimum genus hominum, qui duo principia rerum produnt, alterum malarum, alterum bonarum, nec primatum romane ecclesie tenent neque Christum equalem consubstantialemque Patri esse fatentur. horum cenobia in abditis montium conuallibus sita feruntur, in quibus aegrotantes matrone seruituras sanctis uiris, si euaserint, ad certum tempus Deo uouent. [...] hanc labem nulla sedis apostolice decreta, nulla christianorum arma delere potuerunt. sinit ad nostram exercitationem regnare hereticos Deus. (ibid., 16, 59)*

Bavaria.³⁰

It adds to these fractures or stains (*labes*, as Piccolomini puts it), the existence of many heresies in Bohemia: Adamites who advocated a return to paradise (practising, for that purpose, a total communion of property, along with nudism and the abolition of social distinctions); Hussites and Taborites (both present in Bohemia, but in Moravia as well) groups prefiguring Reformed Christendom, which are seen by Piccolomini as abnormalities in the religious landscape of Europe. Also the Greek world of South and Eastern Europe (Ruthene, Bulgarians and part of the Lituanians) is counted among such heresies: indeed they stand for the *Graeci errores*, or, to use the expression of the later *Commentarii*, the *Graeca perfidia*.³¹ Thus, the conclusion is that this Europe is far from being a homogeneous area.

Therefore, neither creeds or languages make for European identity as Piccolomini understands it, or put in another way, the principles for European identity he advances don't fit the reality. Despite some common ground, Piccolomini discovers, much to his distaste, multiple factors of difference if not of conflict. But Piccolomini doesn't confine his analysis to Europe as though it were an ivory tower. Indeed, Europe is at stake in face of the Turkish threat alluded to in the beginning of the treatise. A corollary of this situation is that European identity becomes more obvious and a less troubled issue.³² There is no clearest expression of an awakening to European identity in face of an imminent invasion of Europe by Turkish power than the expression he forged in his speech before the Frankfurt Diet: "now truly we have been stricken and felled in Europe, that it to say in our own fatherland, in own our own house, in our seat."³³

Later in the same speech, speaking of the fall of Constantinople, Piccolomini uses a metaphor

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 40, 141.

³¹ *Graeca instituta perfidia, latinis inimica sacris et Romanae hostis Ecclesiae. (Commentarii, 7, 1370)*

³² In tune with other humanists like Poggio Bracciolini who called for a crusade on cultural rather than on religious grounds, see Hankins (1995). Whether the confront Europe/Turks is a main part of European identity or not, that has already been discussed by historians and International Relations scholars: see Yapp (1992) and Rich (1999).

³³ *Nunc vero in Europa, idest in patria, in domo propria, in sede nostra percussi caesique sumus.* (translation from Drace-Francis 2013: 15)

figuring Europe as a body: “Can’t we say that one of the eyes of Christendom been plucked out, and that of its two hands one has been cut off?”³⁴ Both images, of Europe as a home and as a body, chime with Piccolomini’s effort to prove the Scythian or Barbarian origin of Turks in *De Europa*.

Eventually, the failure to mobilize European leaders to an anti-Turkish crusade led Piccolomini, now as Pope, to write a letter to Mehmed II, in which he tried to deter the Turkish leader from invading Europe, offering him, to that purpose, the imperial crown, under the condition of conversion to Christian faith.

*We cannot believe that you are unaware of the resources of the Christian people — how strong in Spain, how warlike France, how numerous are the people of Germany, how powerful Britain, how bold Poland, how vigorous Hungary, how rich spirited and skilled in warfare is Italy.*³⁵

As one can see by this excerpt, Piccolomini tries to exalt Europe as a unity but his wording betrays the reality of a Europe as a set of nations each one boasting of its virtues.

To sum, Europe was an issue dealt with by Piccolomini since the early years of his career. He attempted to ascertain its identity, analyze its internal equilibria and conflicts. The European identity based on religious or cultural grounds he figured out is quite precarious. Indeed it is the intrusion of another player in the international politics, i.e. the Turks, which stimulates his thoughts and gives them both an emotional overtone and the insight to see through the crisis the possibility of Europe as a whole. Perhaps it lies there the origin of the sympathy he earned from European thinkers.

Bibliography

³⁴ *Nonne ex duobus Christianitatis oculis alterum erutum, ex duabus manibus alteram amputatam dicere possumus. (Orationes I, 264)*

³⁵ *Nos non ita ignarum te credimus nostrarum rerum, quin scias quanta est christianae gentis potentia, quam valida Hispania, quam bellicosa Gallia, quam populosa Germania, quam fortis Britannia, quam audax Polonia, quam strenua Hungaria quam dives et animosa et bellicarum perita rerum Italia.* Translation is quoted from Hay 1966: 83-83, the latin text from D’Ascia 2001: 233 f.

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